Rhetoric and Writing Studies

RWS 1302 | CRN: 23831 | Meetings: M 10:30–11:50

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Office Hours: University Writing Center, M 12-3 and by appointment

Course Description

The primary goal of RWS 1302 is to develop students’ critical thinking skills in order to facilitate effective communication in all educational, professional, and social contexts. This effective communication is based on an awareness of and appreciation for discourse communities as well as knowledge specific to subject matter, genre, rhetorical strategy, and writing process.

The class presents an approach to communication that helps students determine the most effective strategies, arrangements, and media to use in different rhetorical contexts. It teaches students a systematic approach for analyzing rhetorical situations and then producing a variety of documents and presentations while gaining more confidence and fluency in visual, oral, and written communication. In addition, because communication is central to being an active and engaged member of society, the course also provides a space for informed advocacy.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand a theory of discourse communities;
- Engage as a community of writers who dialogue across texts, argue, and build on each other’s work;
- Draw on existing knowledge bases to create “new” or “transformed” knowledge;
- Develop a knowledge of genres as they are defined and within discourse communities;
- Address the specific, immediate rhetorical situations of individual communicative acts;
- Develop procedural knowledge of the writing task in its various phases.
- Engage reflection about their own learning.
Students will also have the opportunity to strengthen skills sets in the following areas:

- Think, read, and write critically;
- Formulate research questions and perform primary and secondary research to answer those questions;
- Become familiar with the contents of the UTEP Library, in a variety of forms and areas of professional study (e.g. the arts, humanities, sciences, nursing, social sciences, business, engineering, and education);
- Analyze and synthesize material from outside sources;
- Develop a sensitivity to the significance of data and how it can be rhetorically applied to various genres; and,
- Apply research to various genres;
- Master documentation within a discipline (APA);
- learn writing strategies for integrating source material into your own prose (quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material); write analytical and argumentative papers appropriate to genres and larger discourse communities.

This course is also designed to promote your overall success, inside and outside the classroom. Our coursework will help you to improve in key areas such as communication, confidence, critical thinking, leadership, problem solving, social responsibility and teamwork. To find out more about the university’s plan to improve student engagement and learning, visit the UTEP Edge.
Required Texts & Materials

Both required textbooks are available through the UTEP bookstore.

  - ISBN: 978-1-59871-803-4
  - ISBN: 978-1-7326112-1-4
  - Note: This text is only available in e-book format.
- Other assigned readings will be available on Blackboard

Course Assignments

This section overviews the required assignments for this course. The icons relate to relevant UTEP Edge learning outcomes. Major assignment instructions can be found in *The First-Year Composition Handbook*. Further class-specific guidelines for these assignments will be available on Blackboard.

**Topic Proposal (20 points)**

Early in the semester, you will select a topic that you will research over the course of the semester. While this topic may deepen and develop over time, you will have to stick with your overall topic for the duration of the course. You will write a brief topic proposal, which will need to be approved by me before you can continue with your work for this course.
Genre Analysis (100 points)
For this project, you will identify two texts on your chosen topic, but in different genres, to write a comparative analysis. You will write multiple drafts of this project.

Literature Review/Primary Research Report (200 points)
For this project, you will conduct primary and secondary research on your topic in order to become a well-informed expert on the issue. You will then write a literature review of these sources to summarize and synthesize the arguments and ideas of the research sources. You will write multiple drafts of this assignment.

Advanced Visual Argument – Option 1: Documentary Film (200 points)
For this assignment, you will work in small groups to develop a documentary film based on your research topic.

E-Portfolio – Option 2: Advocacy Website w/ Online Opinion Piece (100 points)
You will create an advocacy website pertaining to your semester’s research topic. This website will also require you to write an opinion piece based on your research.

Class Presentation (50 points)
You will present your Advanced Visual Argument Documentary to the class during the week before finals.
Other Assignments (330 points)

- **Syllabus Quiz (5 points):** I expect you to read the syllabus thoroughly and complete the syllabus quiz during the first week of the semester. Completing this quiz represents an agreement that you have read and understood the syllabus in its entirety.

- **APA Review (20 points):** During the first week of the semester, you will brush up on your citation and APA skills. These skills will be necessary for you to use throughout the semester in your other assignments, so please take this review seriously.

- **Writing Center Visit (5 points):** You are required to visit the University Writing Center at least once this semester to receive feedback/assistance on one assignment.

- **Process Journal (90 points):** For three of your assignments (Genre Analysis, Literature Review, and Advanced Visual Argument), you will be asked to keep a journal of your time and effort spent developing your writing. Detailed instructions of this assignment to follow on Blackboard.

- **Process Assignments (90 points):** These assignments will include pre-writing assignments, in-class activities, rough drafts, in-class peer workshops, one-on-one conferences with me, and other homework activities. All of these activities will help you prepare for and build towards your major assignments.

- **Weekly Discussion Board Posts (12 weeks @ 10 points each = 120 points):** Since this is a hybrid course, you will be expected to be online several times a week, interacting with your classmates. These discussion posts serve as a gauge for your online attendance (see attendance policy). There will be an assigned discussion post due each Thursday; usually this post will ask you to engage with the reading in some way. Each Monday before we meet for class, you will read and respond to one of your classmates in a substantial way. This means you will need to read and engage with your classmate’s writing, while continuing to draw on the reading material. You will have 12 weeks of discussion board posts. (There are a total of 15 weeks in the semester.) Each week’s posts will be worth 10 points.
Grade Distribution (Students can earn a total of 1000 points for the course):

1000–900 = A 899–800 = B 799–700 = C 699–600 = D 599 and below = F

Course Delivery

This course is taught as a hybrid class—with one face-to-face meeting for lecture and discussion, and the rest of the course utilizing Blackboard. It is vital for you to regularly check your UTEP email and Blackboard.

You should allocate sufficient time for the class projects and work. The general rule for all classes is that students spend two hours working outside of class for each class credit. Because this is a 3-hour class, expect to spend 6 hours doing researching and writing each week, but since the class only meets for 1.5 hours a week, add the additional 1.5 hours to the 6 for a total of 7.5 hours of work to be completed outside of face-to-face class time.

This course is technology enhanced, and all of the supplementary material for the class will be delivered via Blackboard. It is strongly recommended that students have access to Internet from home and are comfortable using a computer. If home access is not possible, arrangements can be made to use a computer regularly on campus in order to complete the work. Student computer labs such as ATLAS (http://issweb.utep.edu/) are often available until midnight, but schedules do vary. A great deal of work will be done online, and not having access to a computer will affect your ability to turn in assignments on time.

Submitting Work

All work will be submitted on Blackboard. Since Blackboard comment function works best with Microsoft Word documents, you must submit all assignments as Word documents. Microsoft Word is available to students at all campus computers, and you can download it for free to your personal computer. If you choose to use Pages, Google Drive, or some other program, you will need to convert your files to .docx before submitting to Blackboard.
For certain assignments and drafts, I will ask you to submit a hard copy, as well as submitting to Blackboard. I will let you know which assignments those are when the time comes.

Revisions and Multiple Drafts

The activities in this course will be focused on developing and honing your personal writing process as we progress through each major assignment. To help you do this, you will write multiple drafts of each assignment and get feedback on those drafts from your peers, myself, and/or the University Writing Center. Through this process, you will learn to substantially revise—not just edit—your papers.

For your Genre Analysis and your Literature Review, you will submit a hard copy of your “Final” Draft on the assigned due date. I will offer extensive feedback on these drafts but will not assign a grade. Instead, I will return the draft with my comments within 1-2 weeks. After I return your draft, you will have 1 week to revise and resubmit your draft to Blackboard. During that week, I encourage you to visit the University Writing Center to ensure you are addressing all of the feedback. Only after you have revised and resubmitted your paper will I assign a grade to this assignment.

Late Work

It is important that you submit all work on time for full credit and feedback. Any late assignment will be automatically docked 20% of its point value. This includes weekly discussion board posts which have two due dates each week. If you submit a discussion post late on either or both of its due dates, you will still be docked 20% of the entire week’s discussion board points.

If you fail to complete an assignment within one week of its original due date, I will not grade the late work.
Extensions

You are allowed one free five-day extension, which can be used on any assignment that is due before April 24th. When you use an extension, there is no late penalty. After April 24th, you may not use any free extensions. You only get one, so use it wisely.

To use your free extension, you must *email me before the assignment is due* to let me know you are using the extension. You don’t need to tell me why you’re using it, but you can’t forget to do an assignment and let me know you’re using the extension after-the-fact. In other words, using an extension requires a little bit of planning and forethought. Once you have notified me, you have exactly 5 days after the original due date to complete your assignment.

Classroom Etiquette

- Electronic devices can be very helpful in the classroom whether a smartphone, tablet, or computer. However, if their use does not contribute to the conversation or tasks in the classroom then I have the right to ask you to put it away or turn it off, even if it is a personal device.

- Debate, critical inquiry, and intellectual diversity are essential elements to higher education and a process of learning. There is the potential during this course for controversial and sensitive topics to be discussed during small group or whole class interaction, and to surface through our social media activity. You are expected to demonstrate the utmost respect and courtesy for your peers with differing arguments, viewpoints, and/or experiences. Sexist, racist, homophobic, or other hateful speech will not be tolerated.

- As a general rule, always consider audience, in class and online. Remember that members of the class and the instructor will be reading any postings. When reacting to someone else’s message (verbal or written), address the ideas, not the person.

- Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted on in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly
accessible website, blog, or other space. If students wish to do so, they have the ethical obligation to first request the permission of the writer(s).

**Attendance**

According to The University of Texas at El Paso’s catalog: “The student is expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions and attendance is mandatory for all freshman-level courses (1XXX). It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of extended absences. (For further information regarding excused absences refer to UTEP’s Catalog Curriculum and Classroom Policies.

Since this is a hybrid course, attendance will be taken in two forms—in person and online. If you miss more than two class periods OR you miss more than 2 weeks of Weekly Discussion Board Posts, OR a combination of the two forms of attendance, you may be dropped from this course. If you reach the limit of absences beyond the Withdraw deadline, you will likely fail the course.

**Lateness**

If you are going to be late to class, please make your entrance quietly and try not to disturb your classmates. It is up to you to ensure (at the end of class) that I have counted you present for the day, as I take roll at the very beginning of class. If you arrive unreasonably late or leave class unreasonably early, making you miss too much of the class’s material, I reserve the right to count you absent for that day. To access the syllabus quiz use: vampires

**Academic Integrity**

The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Visit the
Office of Dean of Students

Instructors are required to report the suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Affairs.

Accommodations

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we’ll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to visit the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) in room 106, Union East Building or contact them at 747-5148 or cass@utep.edu. If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have these met. There are also a range of resources on campus, including the Writing Center, Counseling Center, Military Student Success Center and Academic Advising Center.

University Writing Center

UTEP’s University Writing Center (UWC) offers free writing tutoring assistance for all UTEP students. The tutors are undergraduate and graduate students who can help with all parts of a writing assignment, including prewriting, organizing, revising, and editing. They can also help to understand any writing assignment and help work on comprehending difficult textbook material. Note: To facilitate revision, I encourage you to visit the writing center at least 12 hours before the assignment is due.

Military Students

If you are a military student (veteran, dependent, active) please visit the Military Student Success Center. I also recognize the complexities of being a student veteran. If you are a student veteran, please inform me if you need special accommodations. Drill schedules, calls to active duty, complications with GI Bill disbursement, and other unforeseen military and veteran-related developments can complicate your academic life. If you make me aware of a complication, I will do everything I can to assist you or put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you.
Important Dates for this Semester

Jan. 21-24  Late Registration (Fees incurred)
Feb. 5      Spring Census Day (If payments aren’t received this day, you will be dropped.)
Mar. 21     Midterm Grades are Due
Mar. 16-20  Spring Break (No Class)
Mar. 27     Cesar Chavez Holiday (No Class)
Apr. 3      Spring Withdrawal Deadline
Apr. 10     Spring Study Day (No Class)
May 8       Dead Day
May 11-15   Final Exams
May 21      Final Grades are Posted

Visit [https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/registrar/Academic%20Calendars/academic-calendar.html](https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/registrar/Academic%20Calendars/academic-calendar.html) for other important dates.

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Assignments are listed on the dates they are due. You will notice that most weeks you have two due dates (Mondays and Thursdays). Monday’s assignments are to be completed before class starts (10:30). Thursday’s assignments may be submitted before midnight that day. Multiple due dates will help keep you maintain a constant presence in this course, despite only meeting once a week face-to-face.

WIT = *Writing in Transit*

FYC = *The First-Year Composition Handbook (e-book)*

BB = Blackboard

Week 1: 1/20

*R (midnight):*

- Reading: WIT Ch. 12: Citing Resources
- Reading: Course Syllabus
• Assignment: Week 1 Discussion Board Post
• Assignment: Syllabus Quiz

Week 2: 1/27

M (before class):
• Reading: FYC - “Introduction to RWS 1302”
• Assignment: APA Review
• Assignment: Week 1 Discussion Board Response

R (midnight):
• Reading: WIT Ch. 2
• Assignment: Topic Proposal Due
• Assignment: Week 2 Discussion Board Post

Week 3: 2/3 – Practicing Genre Analysis

M (before class)
• Reading: WIT Ch. 7
• Reading: FYC – Assignment #2: Genre Analysis
• Writing: Week 2 Discussion Board Response

R (midnight):
• Reading: FYC “Writing the Genre Analysis”
• Writing: Genre Analysis Outline Due
• Writing: Week 3 Discussion Board Post

Week 4: 2/10

M (before class):
• Reading: TBA (Something on Revision)
• Writing: Genre Analysis DRAFT Due
• Writing: Week 3 Discussion Board Response

R (midnight):
• Work on revising your Genre Analysis, nothing due to Blackboard
Week 5: 2/17

M (before class): Library Visit 1 RefWorks
  • Reading: FYC - Assignment 3: Literature Review/Research Report
  • Writing: Final Genre Analysis Due (bring hard copy to class)
  • Writing: Process Journal 1 Due (submit in whatever form is best)

R (midnight):
  • Reading: TBA
  • Writing: Week 5 Discussion Board Post

Other Major Due Dates (subject to change)

Literature Review: March 30
Advanced Visual Argument: May 4
Class Presentation: May 4
E-Portfolio/Advocacy Website: May 11